

VZCZCXRO2306
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHMR #0048/01 0431113
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 121113Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4591
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0024
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 5027

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000048

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/S AND AF/RSA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [CN](#) [LT](#)
SUBJECT: CHINESE ENGAGEMENT IN LESOTHO AND POTENTIAL AREAS FOR
COOPERATION

REF: STATE 10152

MASERU 00000048 001.2 OF 002

Introduction

¶1. (U) According to Gao Deyi, China's Ambassador to Lesotho, there are approximately 5,000 Chinese in Lesotho (other figures estimate 10,000), though the number has declined over the past twenty years due to harsh living conditions and high rates of crime targeted against Chinese. A study by Yoon Park and Barry Sautman exploring anti-Chinese sentiment in southern Africa revealed some of the reasons for crime targeted against ethnic Chinese. They originally looked at Namibia, Zambia, and Lesotho, and their research is continuing in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Park and Sautman found that successive waves of anti-foreigner violence in Lesotho in 1991, 1998, and 2007 mainly targeted Chinese immigrants.

¶2. (U) Traders are one of the major target groups for anti-Chinese violence. Immigrants, mostly recent arrivals from Fujian, attract the usual accusations of "clannishness," lack of English or Sesotho, and selling poor quality goods and expired foodstuffs. Their very presence is taken as proof of government corruption, as the law is supposed to reserve small trade for Lesotho nationals. Labor conditions in Chinese-owned textile plants are another widely-quoted grievance, though labor union leaders told Park and Sautman that conditions had improved substantially since 2005. Paradoxically, Chinese(Taiwanese)-owned factories are the hub of Lesotho's economy, still employing around 32,000 people, down from 45,000 employees before the global recession. These textile and other factories attract experienced Chinese to Lesotho. Ambassador Deyi estimates that about 30% of the Chinese in Lesotho will return to China at some point, but the remainder will stay in Lesotho or move on to a third country.

Overall Chinese Engagement in Lesotho

¶3. (U) Political Relations: The People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Lesotho re-established diplomatic relations in 1994 and since then bilateral relations between the two countries have been growing. Roughly 12 different ministers from the government of China (GOC) have visited Lesotho for political reasons, and senior officials from Lesotho's government (GOL) have visited China. These include King Letsie III, Prime Minister Mosisili, and several government ministers. The latest visit was by the Minister of Communications, Science and Technology, Mothetjoa Metsing, who was in China February 2-8, 2010, at the invitation of the Communist Party of China (CPC).

Metsing, also Secretary General of the governing Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) party, said the main purpose of his visit was to deepen relations between the CPC and the LCD, and to learn from China's successful experience of state governance and economic development.

¶4. (U) Trade Relations and Economic Cooperation: The GOC has helped Lesotho establish the Juncao mushroom cultivation technology demonstration centre in Maseru. China introduced this project to help Lesotho explore an innovative way to solve the food shortage problem. Juncao technology has already been promoted in 60 countries in Africa. Recently, the GOC donated USD 13,333 to the GOL for its preparations for the World Expo 2010, which will run from May 1 to October 30 in Shanghai. The GOL used part of these funds to contract a China-based company to construct the Lesotho Pavilion at the Shanghai EXPO 2010. The GOC has also granted Lesotho a concessional loan of USD30 million for the National Telecom Network Expansion project.

¶5. (U) Exchanges in the fields of culture, education and health: China and Lesotho signed an implementation agreement on cultural exchange. From 2001-2004, there was an exchange of visits by culture ministers and cultural troops. Fine arts and paintings from each nation were exhibited respectively in the capitals of the two countries. The Chinese government donated a computer lab to the National University of Lesotho and provided 17 scholarships to Basotho students who are currently studying in China. The two governments also signed a protocol to send a Chinese medical team to work in Lesotho for a period of two to three years. So far, China has sent about 100 professional doctors to practice at Lesotho's Queen Elizabeth II Hospital. As part of human resource training cooperation, about 250 Basotho have been trained in China, including 6 military officers.

¶6. (U) Assistance with Buildings: The government of China is funding the ongoing construction of the new parliament building

MASERU 00000048 002.2 OF 002

for Lesotho. China has also funded the construction of the National Convention Center, Butha-Buthe Industrial Park, the National Library and Archives, and two rural secondary schools.

U.S.-China collaboration

¶7. (SBU) There is currently no U.S. - China collaboration in Lesotho, nor is there evidence of any collaboration between China and any third country in Lesotho. Although there is an active local donor coordination group, the Development Partners Consultative Forum, the Chinese typically do not participate except to provide a silent presence at the group's meetings with government ministers. Post interprets this as a China's desire to focus exclusively on the bilateral relationship with Lesotho.

¶8. (SBU) Given the Chinese provision of doctors to Lesotho's public hospitals, post feels that incorporating these human resources into the health system strengthening aspects of its PEPFAR projects might be an appropriate area for future collaboration. There is a severe shortage of doctors and other health care professionals in Lesotho, and PEPFAR's recently signed Partnership Framework with the GOL places an emphasis on strengthening this area.

NOLAN